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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 009029

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN TO SEND CONFIDENTIAL EMISSARY TO SYRIA

REF: A. AMMAN 8948

[B](#). STATE 205436

[C](#). AMMAN 8766

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Since receiving, and turning down, a message and invitation from Syrian President Bashar al-Asad conveyed by Walid al-Muallim (ref c), Jordan's King has continued to receive messages from Damascus. The new Jordanian Ambassador to Syria presented his credentials in an unprecedented matter of days after his arrival, and shortly afterward had a longer audience with Asad. The Syrian President gave him a handwritten note for King Abdullah, asking for Jordan's help in getting the U.S. and the UN to ease up in light of Syrian "cooperation." Asad asked the King to come to Damascus to see firsthand the level of that cooperation. The note asserted readiness to hand over any Syrian wanted for questioning to Mehlis anywhere, except in Lebanon.

[1](#)2. (C) Maarouf Bakhit, the new Director of National Security to the King, raised this issue with Ambassador on November [1](#)21. He is well aware, after several conversations, of the importance we place on isolating and pressuring Syria. He nonetheless noted the visits to Syria of Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan and Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul. King Abdullah has no intention of traveling to Syria and is dismissive of Syrian claims of cooperation, but has agreed to a proposal to send Bakhit on an unpublicized visit. The purpose would be to tell Asad in unvarnished terms that he has two choices: he can cooperate with the international community now, or he can cooperate later. The longer he delayed, the more painful the process would be for him, his regime, and regional stability. Bakhit would also ask that Syria handover two terrorist suspects who fled Jordan and are wanted in connection with the Aqaba Katyusha attacks, and whose network may have supported the hotel bombers.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador reiterated ref B points. Bakhit recognized that the Syrians might arrange a press ambush for the "unpublicized" visit, and will have contingency press guidance that will emphasize the sternness of Jordan's message. The trip is likely to occur in the next few days.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The visit serves no positive purpose from our perspective, but as a vulnerable neighbor of Syria, Jordan clearly feels compelled to keep a channel of communication open. Bakhit has gone to pains to consult us and to assure us the message will be squarely focused on the need for full and immediate cooperation with the UN and with Mehlis. On several occasions, the King has observed to Ambassador that the Saudis and Egyptians are actively undercutting that message, by seeking to build Arab League support behind Syria and against outside intervention. The spirit of the Bakhit message will be that there is no such Arab consensus and cooperation with the UN is essential.

HALE